

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

Number 235

May 4th, 1944

SPRING MEETINGS OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

VITAL SOCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL TOPICS DISCUSSED

The Spring meetings of the British Council of Churches took place from April 25th to April 27th, 1944, in London. The Archbishop of Canterbury presided, with some assistance from the Very Rev. J. Hutchison Cockburn and Lord Rochester. Leaders of all the participating Churches were present, with the exception of the Irish representatives, who were prevented by the travel restrictions.

Much attention was given to international problems. Discussions took place on the restoration of oecumenical contacts after the war, on ways in which Christian influence could be brought to bear on the peace settlement, on the development of friendly relations with the American Churches and on the situation in India. News was given of progress made by the Committee for the Reconstruction of Christian Institutions in Europe, and in this connection a Resolution was passed (to be submitted later to Churches) urging that British Churches should not appeal to other countries for assistance in the rebuilding of British Churches, in view of the much greater need which will almost certainly prevail in the occupied countries.

Religion and Life

Striking figures were given showing the growth of Religion and Life Weeks. These revealed that the Religion and Life Weeks held in recent years had increased as follows: 1940, 1; 1941, 5; 1942, 21; 1943, 60; 1944, 51 (at present arranged).

A long and weighty discussion took place on the advice to be given to those who wished to join "the Church" after being interested in Christianity through the united efforts of the Churches in Religion and Life Weeks.

Reports were given of the work done by various other departments of the British Council of Churches, e.g. the Department of Youth and the Department on Faith and Order. Recommendations were made concerning the formation of local Councils of Churches which might be in association with the British Council of Churches.

Social Responsibility

The Department of Social Responsibility made reports and recommendations concerning moral welfare, town and country planning and rural reconstruction. An interesting report was presented on the work of chaplains in industrial establishments. While warm tribute was paid to the work being done in the factories and gratitude expressed for the new opportunities provided, it was felt that the principle of appointing permanent full-time chaplains for factories in peace time would raise far-reaching issues in which the whole nature and structure of Church organisation would be involved.

As at present the proceedings of the British Council of Churches are conducted on a confidential basis it is not possible to record all the resolutions and decisions taken, but the above summary of the discussions, which has been authorised for publication by the British Council of Churches, will give readers at home and overseas some picture of the most prominent concerns of the British Churches at this stage in the war.

ARCHBISHOPS' CALL FOR WORK OVERSEAS

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have issued the following call to the Church of England for 800 volunteers for work over-

Distributed by

BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

An Agency of The British Government

30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

seas in the two years immediately after the war:—

The war is not yet over and victory has still to be won. But the prospect now seems sure enough for people everywhere to speak of what should happen "after the war." What is quite certain is that we can only "win the peace" if in our own people generally there is a spirit more eager to serve and give than to get and to enjoy. We must enter on the days of peace in a spirit of dedication as complete as that which has upheld us in the days of war; and our outlook must be world-wide.

It is time therefore for the Church to face its distinctive obligations in the post-war world, and nothing narrower than a world-horizon befits its character. Membership of this universal community compels a willingness to serve it wherever God appoints. Partnership with local Churches in other continents compels a readiness to share resources as members one of another.

It was from our own parishes that the men and women went forth whom the Churches of to-day reverence as their Augustines and Columbas. Their strong faith and gallant adventures have enriched our Anglican tradition with a legacy of which we must prove ourselves worthy. Churches founded at great cost we must at whatever cost reinforce according to their need. Everywhere it will be necessary to replace many men and women who have stayed at their posts long after retirement or return was due, and to make good several years' deficiency in the supply of recruits.

As a Church then let us face the fact that it will be our privilege and obligation immediately after the war to put at the disposal of our sister-Churches in Africa, in the Near East, in India, Burma and Ceylon, in the Far East, in the Southern Seas, in the Bush Brotherhoods of Australia, in the West Indies and South America, many men and women whom it will not be easy to spare. Those whom these Churches ask us to lend them will inevitably be just those whom we would most wish to retain at home. It is a service which we cannot withhold without injury to the Kingdom of our Lord.

The Missionary Societies which are the main channels of supply and reinforcement between the Church in this country and the Churches overseas have carefully surveyed the ground and calculated that approximately 800 volunteers will be called for in the two years after the war. These include nearly 300 Priests, over 50 Doctors (men and women) and 100 Nurses; 200 educational men and women for University Colleges, Schools and Training Colleges; 40 laymen and 60 women for pastoral and

evangelistic work. There is a demand for Radiologists, Medical Auxiliaries and experts in Agriculture, Economics and Social Welfare. The details will be found in the Missionary Council's leaflet on *Vacant Posts*, while the background is filled in in the Missionary Council's Unified Statement for 1944 on the subject of Recruiting. Clearly the Church must enlist a large force of volunteers if the Missionary Societies are to be in a position to fulfil the Church's corporate obligations, if the younger Churches are to be upheld, existing work maintained and advance ensured.

But these corporate obligations of Church to Churches cannot be discharged unless the individuals are forthcoming who are willing to put themselves at the disposal of their Church for service overseas in obedience to divine vocation. The call of God is brought home to the heart in divers manners. To some it is communicated with the directness of a command that admits of no refusal. To some is given an overpowering sense of the world's need for the truth which is in Christ, or a passionate desire to relieve the world's suffering, or a disciple's consuming determination to drink of the Master's cup. To others the call is less direct; their decisions issue from the honest weighing and balancing of advice, authority, capacities and circumstance. Come how it may, vocation is God's call to His own service. Before those whose lives have been spared decide how those lives should be spent, we would urge their looking inward to watch within earshot for God's call, and looking outward to scan the whole horizon of the Church universal for indications of the particular sphere of service to which God would call them.

WILLIAM CANTUAR.
CYRIL EBOR.

METHODIST MISSIONS

The Methodist Missionary Society reports on the present situation in its magazine and makes its own appeal for more workers as soon as they can go abroad.

"The financial year (1943) ended even more happily than was forecast in the March number of *The Kingdom Overseas*. The all-but-final figures published in *The Methodist Recorder* of February 24th, showed an increase in the General Fund of £39,371, and on Women's Work of £16,247, a total increase for the year of £55,618.

The Shortage of Workers Overseas

"In the strange emergency days through which we pass there is a great shortage of men and women missionaries. This shortage may continue for a considerable time even after the end of the war. Under these circumstances, Overseas Synods have been

appealing, through the Missionary Committee, to ex-missionaries in the home circuits to *return to the field*, at least for a time, to ease the staffing situation. The Church will not be surprised to hear that there has already been a wide response. There is no wonder in this to those who know—only great thankfulness.”

CHAPLAINS WITH THE FRONTIER FORCE

A story of the activities of Chaplains with the British Army, now fighting the Japanese in Burma, has recently come to hand. The story begins: “I crawled 200 yards and found the Padre who attended to my wound and saw me safely back before he returned to the forward troops. He was a grand chap. Our Padre was killed when the glider made a forced landing.”

“Behind those two bald statements, made to me on separate occasions by two soldiers returning from vigorous action many miles in the rear of the Japs, is the story of the way in which our Chaplains are moving with men of the Special Force, sharing their hardships and dangers, and living and marching under exactly the same conditions, and wearing the same equipment plus the Chaplain’s special requirements and first-aid outfits,” writes an officer observer with the Special Force.

“The very fact of their presence is giving fresh impetus to men who are away from their base for many weeks on end, and who are striking hard and often and from unexpected quarters at the Japs, under conditions which can scarcely be visualized. The undergrowth is so thick that men fling themselves at it bodily to force their passage. They are faced by swamps and river crossings, and the jungle, which the sun rarely penetrates, high hills and scrub.

“Last year, prior to the expedition which thrilled the world by its boldness and audacity, the late General Wingate was of the opinion that only the most essential men should be taken on such a venture. When the Force returned, however, the majority of the column leaders agreed that there was a real need for a Chaplain in every column. The General too had altered his original opinion, and the ideal now aimed at is for each column to have its own Padre.

“In an interview, the Rev. Christopher Perowne, Deputy Assistant Chaplain General, who is with the Special Force, said: ‘The Chaplain goes in exactly as every other soldier, carrying out the same training, wearing the same equipment. He shares completely in the life of the column, but above everything, he is a man of God, and

as His witness, carries on Christ’s Ministry to the best of his ability among all with whom he comes in contact. Naturally he assists the Medical Officer, and makes use of his own knowledge of first aid. The average conception of a Chaplain’s duties has changed considerably. The Padre’s Hour had to be dropped and routine parade services could not take place. The Chaplain adapts himself to the immediate circumstances, and holds services, prayers, or Holy Communion, according to the situation. He is now looked upon as a vital spiritual link in the Force, and also carries on welfare work. Arrangements are made for fresh supplies of Communion wine, wafers, prayer cards, and New Testaments to be dropped by parachute, and the men have been given a special booklet which is easy to carry, and includes hymns, prayers, psalms, and Bible readings for most circumstances which men in the front line face. Normally, the Communion set, especially designed for use in the jungle, is carried in a pouch attached to the Chaplain’s web-belt.’

“The Rev. C. Perowne added that volunteers among lay readers, ordination candidates and elders of Nonconformist Churches, have been enrolled to help with services when Chaplains are not available. A number of Chaplains have arrived from the Middle East and direct from Britain to serve the forward troops.”

LAST MESSAGE OF A BELGIAN CHRISTIAN

A moving message from a Christian about to be executed has been published in Geneva.

“As we have already announced, the son of a Belgian pastor has been executed. He was studying medicine with a view to undertaking missionary work in the Belgian Congo. Before dying, he wrote to his Protestant youth group a last message which runs as follows:—

“ ‘In a few hours I shall no longer be on this earth of misery and war, but in the glorious and peaceful palace of my Creator and Saviour. Dear friends, I am saying to you not good-bye, but au revoir, for we shall see each other again on high, and be reunited for ever. I think again with pleasure of the blessed times which we have had together. I ask you to sing the hymn “Blest be the tie that binds” at one of your meetings, thinking of me for the last time. I want to send you a last message. God holds the destiny of each one of us in His hands, and when He calls us to appear before Him, let us be ready to answer Him in all circumstances: Here I am. God may ask great sacrifices of us; let us know how to surrender everything and

have the calm of leaving this earth without regret. What does the earth offer us? Nothing very splendid. So let us go forward, trusting in the Lord, our hand in His, ready to face any situation in which He may place us. That is why I thank and bless God for maintaining peace in my soul. I wish each one of you a blessed New Year. May God send you His peace and bless you all. I greet you all for the last time, calling each one by name; and may those whose names are not written here believe that I do not forget them either. Au revoir (the names follow). . . . Psalm 23.'"

RUSSIAN CHURCH PLANS ITS THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

The Russian Orthodox Church, like the Churches of other lands, is thinking very much about the future. Some of its plans concern the training of men for the Priesthood, and an interesting article on this subject written by Grigory, Archbishop of Saratov, appears in *Soviet War News*.

"In accordance with a project approved by the Holy Synod, it is proposed to found an Orthodox Theological Institute as a school of higher theological education in Moscow, and theological pastorate courses as theological schools of a secondary type in the bishopric districts.

"The period of tuition in the theological-pastorate courses will be two years, and in the Orthodox Theological Institute three years.

"Whereas previously secondary and higher theological education required six or seven years (two years in an ecclesiastical seminary and four years in an ecclesiastical academy), the reduction in the period of education (two years in the secondary school and three years in the higher school) will be compensated by the mental maturity of the pupils (entrants are not to be below 18 years of age) by their personal interest in their studies and by concentration on theological subjects—in the former ecclesiastical educational establishments non-theological sciences were also studied.

"The curriculum in the theological-pastorate courses is arranged in conformity with the programmes of the former ecclesiastical seminaries; and in the Orthodox Theological Institute in conformity with the programmes of the former ecclesiastical academies, with the addition of several new subjects (hagiology, history of Russian religious thought, history of asceticism, history of religion). The whole character of the tuition is given a more practical turn.

"In the theological institute will be studied the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, patristics; history of the Chris-

tian Church, œcumenical and Russian, with hagiology and the history of the Russian religious thought; introduction in the sphere of theological sciences; theology, dogmatic, moral (including asceticism), comparative and pastoral; the history of religion with Christian apologetics; the history and analysis of Russian sectarianism and of the Raskol (schism); the canonical code and the Constitution of the U.S.S.R.; liturgy, including the history of Christian art; Church preaching and teaching of the truths of religious beliefs; Christian hymnology; reading of theological books in the ancient Slavonic-Church language, and Church singing; ancient languages; reading of the Greek text of the Holy Scriptures and of the works of the Holy Fathers of the Church in the Greek and Latin languages; the Hebrew language; reading of selected passages from the Bible; reading of foreign theological, apologetic and polemical literature (Catholic, Protestant and Anglican).

"In the theological-pastorate courses the following will be taught: Biblical history, reading and explanation of selected passages from the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; the Orthodox catechism and Orthodox faith and moral admonition; history of the Christian Church—general and Russian; Christian apologetics, study of sects and of the Raskol (schism); practical guidance for pastors of the Church; Constitution of the U.S.S.R.; liturgy; Church preaching; ancient Slavonic-Church language; conducted Church singing.

"Tuition in the Theological Institute and the theological-pastorate course will be free of charge. Stipends are being instituted for the maintenance of needy students, and boarding-schools are to be opened for those coming from other towns.

"Inasmuch as students of the Orthodox Theological Institute and of the theological-pastorate courses will consist of persons entering them of their own free will and inclination, persons striving to serve the Holy Church, therefore their religious and moral education must, strictly speaking, be a matter of self-education, to be accomplished with all possible assistance from the teaching staff, mainly, of course, by self-sacrificing work for the development of their faculties and inculcation of a Christian and pastoral frame of mind. It follows therefrom that the life of the students in the boarding schools must correspond with the tasks of the theological school; common morning and evening prayer, reading of the Word of God, attending divine service on Sundays and on holidays, common preparation for communion during fasts and irreproachable moral conduct must be obligatory."